

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017, 1 March 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000153

OUTCOME: 5 - Regulation, Safety and Protection

Topic: e-Cigarettes

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Leyonhjelm, David

Question:

A recent report for Public Health England stated that e cigarettes are 95 per cent less harmful to health than cigarettes. Can the Department provide any evidence questioning the validity of this statement?

Answer:

Although some e-cigarette advocates have cited the Public Health England's report that e-cigarettes are around 95 per cent safer to users than traditional cigarettes, this figure has been widely criticised and is not in fact derived from calculations based on numerical observations.¹ It has been disputed in several reputable journals, such as the Lancet and British Medical Journal, and by public health bodies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the European Commission. In August 2016, the WHO stated that no specific figure about how much "safer" (or less harmful) the use of e-cigarettes is compared to tobacco cigarettes can be given any scientific credibility at this time.²

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- 1 See for example, Combes R, Balls M, 'Draft Response regarding comments made by Clive Bates about one of our publications on the safety of electronic cigarettes and vaping', 2016. See also McKee M and Capewell S, 'Evidence about Electronic Cigarettes: Foundation Built on Rock or Sand?', BMJ, vol. 351, 2015.
 - 2 World Health Organisation, "Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS/ENNDS)" WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Geneva, 2016.